

STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

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Iowa Department of Education Announces 2010 Iowa Teacher of the Year

Johnston high school language arts teacher receives state's top teaching honor.

DES MOINES, Iowa – Today, the Iowa Department of Education announced Sarah Brown Wessling as the 2010 Iowa Teacher of the Year. Wessling is a high school language arts teacher at Johnston High School in Johnston.

"As a former teacher, I have seen first-hand the dedication and commitment lowa's teachers bring to the classroom every day," said Governor Chet Culver. "lowa's teachers are some of the best in the country, and Sarah Brown Wessling is no exception. She has set herself apart – both in and out of the classroom – and we are proud to honor her as Iowa's 2010 Teacher of the Year."

Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey agrees, noting Wessling's exceptional skill at making a positive long-lasting impact on her students. "Sarah engages all her students in challenging work, while encouraging them to own their learning experiences through projects of self discovery and discovery of the larger world," said Jeffrey.

Tyler Buller knows exactly what Jeffrey is talking about. A Johnston alum and member of the Johnston Community School District Board of Directors, Buller nominated Wessling for the Iowa teaching award. In his nomination letter, Buller writes, "I find that ... the impact of having taken Sarah's course in high school is evident throughout all my endeavours. The improvements in the concision and clarity of my writing from her course shine today as I draft legislative language and policy proposals... I find myself drawn to the underlying meaning in all forms of art, be it paintings, movies, or television series. And perhaps most importantly, I find myself craving the same lifelong learning that drives Sarah to connect with students and constantly seek to improve her own knowledge and education."

Wessling has taught at Johnston High School for 10 years, where she is chairperson of the English Department. Wessling also taught in the Cedar Falls Community School District for one year.

She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Education and a Master of Arts degree in English from Iowa State University. She was a member of the Phi Kappa Phi International Honor Society and the Phi Beta Kappa Liberal Arts and Sciences Honor Society.

Wessling is a National Board Certified Teacher and has received the Iowa Governor's Scholastic "Favorite Teacher Award" recognition and the Future Leader in Education Award and the Promising Teacher Award from the Iowa Council of Teachers of English.

She is a member of the Iowa Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Johnston Education Association. In addition, she has served on many district committees, including its professional development team, building improvement team, reading leadership team, and high school literacy team.

"When I look in a classroom, I see a story in every learner, unique and yearning to be read," said Wessling in her application. "Creating a community for learning means creating more than a classroom, it means constantly intertwining our stories in a way that reveals our potential."

Finalists for the award are:

- Janet Coon, a middle school life science teacher at East Middle School in the Sioux City Community School District, Sioux City, Iowa;
- Steven Lucke, a 6th-12th grade art teacher in the Bellevue Community School District, Bellevue, lowa:
- Randolph Lyon, a 5th grade teacher at Hoover Elementary School in the Dubuque Community School District, Dubuque, Iowa;
- Andrea Stewart, a high school language arts teacher at Muscatine High School in the Muscatine Community School District, Muscatine, Iowa.

Wessling and the finalists will be recognized at a luncheon, sponsored by Qwest Communications and the University of Northern Iowa, on October 9 at the University of Northern Iowa. Wessling's tenure as Iowa Teacher of the Year will run from January to December of 2010.

The Iowa Teacher of the Year Award was established in 1958 and is sponsored Iowa Department of Education through an appropriation from the Iowa legislature. For more information on the Iowa Teacher of the Year program, please visit the Iowa Department of Education website at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/686/664/. The Iowa Teacher of the Year may serve as the Iowa Ambassador to Education, acting as an education liaison to primary and secondary schools in the state.

The Iowa Department of Education works with the State of Iowa Board of Education to provide oversight, supervision and support for the state education system, which includes public elementary and secondary schools, nonpublic schools that receive state accreditation, area education agencies, community colleges and teacher preparation programs. The department is committed to high levels of learning, achievement and performance for all students, so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce.